GENERAL VIEW

OF THE

AGRICULTURE

OF THE COUNTY OF

BRECKNOCK.

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BRECKNOCK,

WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE MEANS OF ITS IMPROVEMENT.

By JOHN CLARK,

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DRAWN UP FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND INTERNAL IMPROVEMENT.

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M.DCC.XCIV.

BRECKNOCK.

The Reader is requeſted to correct the following

ERRATA.

Page

7. l. 11, read Penkelle, Devynock, Merthyr. l. 14. read, 1300 acres.
8. l. 5, read, in the courſe of ages, formed valleys.
9. l. 5, read, Uſk.
10. l. 5, for *intercept*, read, *interrupt*. l. 5. read, *along* the Eppant hills.
11. l. 21, read, mountainous land that lets for two or three ſhillings an acre.
16. l. 11, for *leaſe*, read, *leave* of his neighbour.
40. l. 1, read, ready to deſiſt *from* the performance.
42. l. 24, read, a *peſt* and a burden.
46. l. 6, read, *knitting* a pair.
48. l. 14, for *farms*, read, *farmers* in this diſtrict.
49. l. 10, for *in*, read, *of* the County of Brecon.
52. l. 32, read, ten or twelve *years* to recover itſelf.
54. l. 13, read, that *in* every improvement.
55. l. 14, for *demonſtation*, read, *demonſtration*. l. 19, for to *avail* himſelf, read, to *avoid* giving a very decided.

Some alterations alſo are neceſſary in regard to the punctuation, the work having been printed without the author having an opportunity of reviſing the proofs.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following valuable communication, respecting the present state of husbandry in the county of Brecknock, and the means of its improvement, drawn up for the consideration of the Board of Agriculture, is now printed, merely for the purpose of its being circulated there, in order that every person, interested in the welfare of that county, may have it in his power to examine it fully before it is published. It is therefore requested, that any remark, or additional observation, which may occur to the reader, on the perusal of the following sheets, may be written on the *margin*, and transmitted to the Board of Agriculture, at its office in London, by whom the same shall be properly attended to; and, when the returns are completed, an account will be drawn up, of the state of agriculture in Brecknockshire, from the information thus accumulated, which, it is believed, will be found greatly superior, to any thing of the kind, ever yet made public.

The Board has adopted the same plan, in regard to all the other counties in the united kingdom; and, it is hardly necessary to add, will be happy to give every assistance in its power, to any person who may be desirous of improving his breed of cattle, sheep, &c. or of trying any useful expetiment in husbandry.

TO

TO THE READER.

IT is requested, that this paper, with any marginal remarks, may be returned to the Board of Agriculture, before the first of March next.

It is hardly necessary to add, that the Board does not consider itself responsible, for any fact or observation contained in these Reports, which, at present, are printed and circulated, for the purpose merely of procuring additional information, and of enabling every one, to contribute his mite, to the improvement of the Country.

January, 1794.

BRECKNOCKSHIRE.

INTRODUCTION.

Brecknockshire is an inland county, and one of the six that compose South Wales. It is bounded, on the north by Radnorshire, on the east by the counties of Hereford and Monmouth, on the south by Glamorganshire, and on the west by the counties of Carmarthen and Cardigan. It is situated in the diocese of St. David's, and archdeaconry of its own name: sends two Members to Parliament, one for the county, and one for the borough of Brecon; and contributes 180 men, as its quota, to the national militia. It is divided into six hundreds, Talgarth, Crickhowel, Penkille, Dwynock, Myrther, and Builth: and into sixty-one parishes. It contains four market towns, Brecon, Hay, Crickhowel, and Builth; 800 square miles, or 512,000 acres of land; 300 acres of water, besides that space occupied by its rivers and brooks. The Welch is the general language of its inhabitants, who may be estimated at 30,000.

The out-skirts of this county, for the most part, consist of lofty mountains, *superficially* barren, except where it is separated from the county of Radnor, by the river Wye, on the north. It is interspersed with hills almost throughout. In the lower part of the county the hillocks, and even the hills, are cultivated a considerable way up, and some of them to the top; but the higher mountains are, in general, very barren, and to the farmer of little use or value.

The river Usk runs nearly through the centre of the county; although it owes its birth to Carmarthenshire, it derives

derives most of its wealth from the mountains and hills of this county. On either side of the Usk, the numerous springs issuing from the mountains, soon form rills, these in a short space become brooks, the further union of which form streams; all these have, in the course of ages, founded valleys, by carrying away the earth, in proportion to their respective degrees of rapidity. The sides of these valleys are appropriated to the operation of the plough, the scythe, or the depasturing of cattle; and the sides of such banks as were too steep to be applied to either of these purposes, are covered with beautiful timber of various kinds, although the oak seems to be lord paramount of the soil.

The mountains and hills of that part of this county, from whence the Usk, and its contributary streams, collect the water, are of the heterogeneous class. The stone, which is of the siliceous genus, is of a dark red colour, and contains a considerable quantity of iron. Since the soil of the flat land, in all mountainous districts, must ever partake of the genus of the stone that compose the surrounding mountains, the characteristic features of the soil under review, is that of a light or sandy loam.

As the valleys are, in general, narrow, and the fall of the brooks, from the surrounding hills, rapid, the defect of the land by the side of the Usk, consists in its having *too small a portion of clay* in its composition. This is easily accounted for, when it is remembered, that the waters of all rivers and brooks, in time of floods, carry off a considerable quantity of clay towards the sea, whilst the sand, by its superior *specific weight*, would sink to the bottom as soon as it arrived at the flats, and form these banks, or level plains, that are found by the sides of most rivers where the fall is not rapid, nor the flood confined by hills to a narrow space.

The proportion which the *good* land, within this county, bears to the *bad*, is very small, not above one fourth part. To the traveller who had just passed through the county

by

by either of the turnpike roads, the fact, however, would seem to be otherwise.

The main road from London to the counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke, and Cardigan, lies 25 miles by the side of the Hok. Leaving Abergavenny, the traveller enters this county at Llangrannock; and although he will soon perceive a change in the soil for the worse, yet in the foreground, he will find a practice of husbandry in which there is not much to blame, and a soil friendly to vegetation, although not so luxuriant as that which he left behind. For the first eight miles, his view is confined to a narrow spot, by the sudden projection of the rocks on either side; yet it is necessary to remind him, that he has seen *all* that, *as an agriculturist*, he would wish to examine in this quarter of the county. For the next eight miles, to the town of Brecon, the vale is extended to a *comfortable* width on both sides; and the dejected mind is thereby relieved from the sudden check by which the barren rocks on either side had formerly repulsed the inquisitive researches of the wishing eye. The VANN, or Brecknock Beacon, the indisputed sovereign of all the mountains in South Wales, rears his bold, but verdant head, above the mountains that surround him on the right. From Brecon to Deveynock, the tillage part of husbandry is performed much in the same manner as in the lower district; but the remainder of the county, to the confines of Carmarthenshire, afford little to commend, but much to blame. That portion of the vale of Usk to which this county lays claim, must, however, upon the whole, afford a considerable degree of satisfaction to the agriculturist, and must prove highly gratifying to the man of picturesque taste.

If, by the other branch of the turnpike from Hereford, he travels to the town of Brecknock, where he joins the former branch, he will be delighted with a sight (to an agriculturist) still more gratifying.

On entering this county at Hay, he will find a soil superior to that of the former route, for most of the way—the foreground extending a considerable way, in a high state of cultivation; and the barren mountains thrown at such a distance in the back ground, as not to intercept the grateful sensations of the exulting mind.

A third route, but, to an agriculturist, a far less inviting one, is to proceed from Pipton to Builth, by the side of the River Wye; and from thence, by the side of the Irvon, to the confines of Carmarthenshire.

By either of these routes, the traveller would be induced to give a description of the nature of the soil, and present state of agriculture, within this county; which a more minute investigation of the whole would by no means warrant.

Were he, however, to proceed from Talgarth to New Church, on the borders of Carmarthenshire, the *Eppant* hills, he would find his mind agitated by sensations very different from those excited by either of the former routes.

A wide range of barren and uncultivated mountains would, for the most part of the way, chill the philanthrophic breast with dejection, and excite compassion for that portion of its kindred race whose inauspicious fate had destined them to become the tenants of this inhospitable region. The eye is mortified by the humiliating review of a circle of thirty miles in diameter, bounded every where by the horizon junction with mountains *still loftier* than those on which the spectator stands. This extensive space, it is true, is covered with various species of vegetables, which nature had destined to become the tenants of the soil, but which cannot be converted, in any considerable degree, to the use of man; especially in the neglected state in which these extensive mountains have hitherto been permitted to remain. Nature, however, has

has not been so sparing of her good gifts as the prospect from this dreary route would seem to indicate.

As in passing by the side of the Usk, the Wye, or the Irvon, by the former routes, the mountainous districts are, in a great measure, hid from the traveller's view; so, on the other hand, in passing along the Eppant hills, the vale of the Usk on the left, and also the inclosed, but less fertile vale, by the side of the Irvon, on the right, are both hid from his view, and the dreary prospect being terminated by barren mountains on the *further* side of each of these vallies; he would be apt to draw a description of this county, which would be equally distant from truth with that of the former.

Extent. Brecknockshire contains about 512,000 acres, which may be divided in the following manner:

		Statute acres.
First.	The good land, which at an average lets from 12s. to 16s. an acre,	128,000
Second.	The middling land, that lets from 4s. to 7s. an acre, —	96,000
Third.	The poor's mountainous land, that lets from 4s. to 7s. an acre,	102,400
Fourth.	The common mountains —	185,600
	Total contents of the county	512,000

DIVISIONS.

The mode of cultivation on the good soil is conducted in such a manner, as leaves little room for improvement; but where the land is poor by nature, the tillage part of husbandry, especially, is conducted in the very worst mode that can easily be imagined. In order, therefore, to convey to the Honourable Board any idea of the present state of agriculture within this county, it will be requisite to divide it into two districts.

The first division will contain most of the inclosed land in the hundred of Talgarth, and the vale of Usk, as high as Daveynog.

The remainder of the inclosed land in the county may, with a few exceptions however, be comprehended under the second division.

FIRST DIVISION.

The stone that compose the hills within that portion of the district from whence the Usk and its contributary brooks collect their water being mostly of the silicecous genus, (sand) the defects of the soil in the vale of Usk must consist in the want of a requisite quantity of clay. The hundred of Talgarth, however, is composed of a soil different, in some degree, for the following reason; The black mountains, from whose springs this fertile portion of the county is watered, are also of the *stratific heterogeneous class*; but they are composed of alternate strata of *stone* and *clay*. This gives a degree of cohesion to the soil within reach of the Wye's attraction in *this* quarter, in which the vale of Usk is deficient.

Size

Size of Farms. The farms in general rent from £.50 to £.100: Several, however, rent from £.200 to £.300 a year. The purpose to which the land is mostly applied, is the raising of grain. Cattle, sheep, and pigs, however, occupy a considerable portion of the farmer's attention.

Inclosures. The size of the inclosures will (or at least ought) always to depend on the size of the farm. The farmer who holds one hundred acres ought to follow the same rotation of crops with him who holds six hundred; but things are seldom as they ought to be: From three to six acres is the general size of fields on small, and from ten to twenty on large farms.

The fences are made in this district in a manner worthy of imitation in other parts, where brushwood (underwood) can be had, and the land is not of any *uncommon* high value, because they are an *immediate* fence. When a new fence is to be made, any kind of underwood that can be most easily had, are grubbed up with the roots any time from *November* till *March*. These are immediately planted where the new hedge is meant to be made. Four feet is left for the foundation of the bank, the *quicks* being planted in the center. A ditch is then dug on each side of the bank, and the earth thrown up to form this bank for three feet high, when it terminates in a ridge from 15 to 18 inches.

If the quicks can be had five feet in length, there will be two feet above the top of the bank when finished; but as this cannot always be the case, one foot above the top of the bank, will soon make a good fence. The closer the plants are placed, the better: at least, the sooner will the fence be impregnable. The distance between the *circumference* of each plant, however, ought not to be more than six inches. One row will be sufficient of these large plants.

When the field is in wheat, the hedges are then *pleached:* that is, all the dead and superabundant wood is cut off from

from the hedge. The tall branches are *half cut*, but not wholly so, because it is intended, that when they are laid along the stakes, new sprouts may issue from them in this horizontal direction, the sap having still a passage from the parent root, by the half that was left uncut, to invigorate these young sprouts, and then others are found. The hedge on this bank is then a firm, solid, and strong body of *live* wood, of a regular heighth, from 15 to 20 inches, above the top of the bank. Since the hedge undergoes this operation every six or eight years, the country has a neat *husbandman-like* appearance, and banishes from the mind of the spectator those unpleasant sensations of *indolence* and *slovenliness* which the sight of overgrown hedges round small inclosures must ever inspire. The average price of pleaching hedges is one halfpenny a yard. The price of making a new bank and fence, two pence a yard, the farmer grubbing and hawling the quicks.

The hedges are formed of different curves. Scarce ten yards of a straight hedge to be seen together in the county. This adds much to the beauty of the country, and to the inconvenience of the ploughmen. Beauty, however, is not the farmers motive in persevering as they still do in making their hedges crooked. The popular, but erroneous idea, prevails here, that a crooked hedge affords more shelter to the cattle, than a straight one; although one would imagine, that no proposition could be more self-evident, than that the one half of the fence of every field is exposed to the wind, and that the other half is sheltered from it; and that ten thousand turns in a hedge do not afford a greater degree of shelter, than if it had been comprehended under four straight lines, or any other regular figure. This evil, however, is not of sufficient importance to claim any serious animadversion; because, in these superfluous short turns, the cattle in the plough do *no great injury to the land;* and the time lost in turning is not *very* considerable.

Every

Every ploughman here is perfectly master of the *straight line;* for every ridge runs mathematically true.

Cattle. There is, undoubtedly, great room for improvement in the breed of neat cattle in this district. Some attempts have been made to introduce the Herefordshire breed: But these, as might naturally have been expected, have always failed; because the genius of the soil, and of course of the grasses in this county, are much inferior to those of Herefordshire.

A breed more likely to succeed, and which well merits propagation, is the Pembrokeshire. The soil of this district is much the same with the sandy soil of the hundred of *Castlemartin*, the best feeding ground in Pembrokeshire. The superior elevation and distance from the sea, renders *this* district much inferior to *that*, in respect to local situation: But the superior judgment, industry, and good management of the natives, as farmers, and cultivators of the soil, removes, in a considerable degree at least, this natural disadvantage.

The Pembrokeshire breed have not yet however had a fair trial in this county, because, among other reasons, they are found troublesome, by a habit of breaking through fences, that would turn back, or confine the native breed of this district.

The Devonshire breed are still more likely to thrive in it; and, it is to be hoped, will get a fair trial.

Watering of Meadows. The benefit to be derived from the flooding of land, is no where better understood, nor the operation more judiciously performed, than in this district. Nature has been so uncommonly bountiful in this respect, that she has left little more for man to do, than gratefully to accept of her proffered gifts. From the sides of surrounding hills, the water rushes forth in innumerable springs, as if placed there by HIM, who formed the mountains for the husbandman's immediate use.

Round

Round most of this district, the brooks are formed by springs, issuing from the hills, at different degrees of elevation, from 1 to 12 hundred feet above the beds of the two main rivers, excepting therefore, the detached hills, interspersed through the middle of the district, most of it might be watered. But man, born to prey upon man sometimes, steps forth to disappoint the beneficent intention. From the intermixed manner, in which the land is possessed in this county, it very frequently happens, that a man cannot raise water on his own land, but is obliged to obtain lease of his neighbour immediately above him, to bring it through some part of his land. This neighbour is either his *foe*, or his *friend*. If he is his foe, he will not give him leave on *any* condition. And such are the materials of which human nature is composed, that if he is his friend, he will be apt to *calculate*, not the value of the damage done to his land by the water-course proposed, but the *benefit* which his neighbour's land *below him*, will reap from the proposed cut, and make his *charge* accordingly*.

Sand being the prevailing genus of the soil, this land is wonderfully well adapted to receive great benefit from being flooded with *any* water, that is not charged with metallic particles hostile to vegetation.

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* Should it be found, not to encroach on the *sacredness* of our laws, respecting private property, it might be an object, worthy of attention, to enquire how far an act of the legislation, to compel individuals to *rent* such a portion, as upon the view of a jury of six men, under directions of the sheriff of the county, should be requisite to carry the water to the lands below. And in order to prevent any wanton, or unnecessary application to the power of such an act, let double the real value of the land be allowed.

When a brook is the boundary of two estates, let each have a right to make weirs across the brook, and fix them to his neighbours land, if requisite, to raise the water over his own ground, provided however, he does not overflow more than number of yards, paying annually the amount of the damage which he does to his neighbour's estate by such weir.

They

They generally feed their beeves upon the lattermath grass of their meadows, without sacrificing this grass; therefore, they are prevented from turning the water on the land, so early in autumn as they could wish.

An intelligent farmer observed, that notwithstanding he valued his lattermath crop at 15 shillings an acre, yet he found, that the cheapest manure he could dress his meadows with, was to sacrifice this crop once in 10 or 12 years, by turning on the water in August, or whenever a *flood* happened after a *long drought*.

To catch the first water of a flood after a long drought, is of very great importance, more especially if the water be collected from common hills, or other pasture grounds that are hanging, or side lands where sheep and cattle have depastured for some time; for their dung, as well as the particles of earth, which the heat of the sun had pulverized, are all swept off by the first autumnal floods, and in general lost from the above circumstance.

The features of the country, from the great number of hillocks and swells in which it abounds, renders it in a peculiar degree, adapted to derive every advantage from flooding; because the water moves quickly off, as soon as it deposits the wealth with which it was charged round the roots of the grass.

After they have eat the lattermath grass, they turn the waters on the meadows the first flood, for they always prefer flood to clear water; they suffer the water to run over the ground for two or three days *only*, never longer at one time. At the end of 10 or 12 days, they turn it on again for the same space of time, and so on, till the end of March. Since however, they cannot get floods to happen at stated distances of time, they are obliged to use the water when they can catch it; but if they had their choice, they would not wish to flood oftener, nor for a longer space of time.

Should the frost set in when the water is on the land, so that some spots should be covered with ice for some days, the spot so covered with ice, will be of a *darker green*, and appear more healthy in the spring, than the rest of the field. But when they come to mow the hay, the crop will be *considerably less*, then that on the other parts of the field that were not covered with ice.

Should they neglect to flood their meadows for one season, a loss of from one half to one third of their usual crops would be sustained.

If the land be steep, a smaller quantity of water is suffered to go over it at a time, than the land that is less steep, least the water should wash off or carry along with it, some particles of the loose earth.

They prefer clear water from the spring for their sandy land, but brook or river water for that of clay.

The farmers here, are very sensible of the benefit of having water from the farm yard, turned over their meadows, and they are very careful to have *the field under the house always a meadow*. The good effects, that the droppings from the farm yard and fold have upon this sandy land, is really astonishing.

Although *all* the waters within this district are beneficial in some degree, in the state in which they issue from the springs, even before they have been incorporated with any other substance, yet some of them are more so than others.

The genus of the stone as has been observed, is of the sandy kind, but there is a vein of limestone, that runs through great part of this district.

When the water from the limestone can be had, it is preferable to any other. There is a circumstance, which has in general, been overlooked by farmers, but which well deserves the attention of those who reside in a *flooding* country like this: that the water issuing from *different* springs, are impregnated with *different kinds*

of

of earth, and therefore, beneficial to the land in very *different proportions*, although all of them may be so in *ſome* degree*.

Rotation of Crops. In the hundred of Talgarth, the following is the systems most generally adopted.

First system. 1st year after clover, lay wheat. 2d year, pease. 3d year barley, and sow clover. 4th year clover,

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* It will not perhaps be foreign to our purpoſe, to throw out a few hints for the consideration of such farmers, as have not paid attention to this subject. This becomes the more requisite, because most of them are apt to ascribe the same properties, and the same defects, to all spring waters.

It may perhaps be requisite, to remind the farmer, though not the chemist, that there is no such element as pure water, for all water is mixed with particles of earth, saline, or metallic substances. It is the quality of these particles, with which the water is thus charged, that gives that of one spring, a superiority over those of another; and which alone forms the characteristic difference of waters. These particles, will always consist of a portion of that earth or stone, over which the water had past, while in the bowels of the earth, before it had burst out in springs to the surface.

The utmost stretch of human ingenuity, has not been able to distill water so pure, but that some terrene particles would still remain. Mr. Boyle distilled one ounce of common water 200 times, in glasses, and obtained 6 drachms of a white light insipid earth, fixed in fire, and indissoluble in water.

It becomes therefore necessary, to examine the kind of stone, of which the hill from whence the spring issues, is composed. Because, not only the qualities of stones differ, but the quantity of one kind of earth, which the water is capable of carrying along with it to the land, is ten times that which it is able to carry of another kind of earth. And let it be held in perpetual remembrance, that the benefit of flooding, will be in the most exact proportion, to the quantity and quality of the matter, which the water carries to the land.

There are five kinds of simple earths; I ſhall however, call the farmers attention (who must be very familiar to them) only to three, *limestone*, *clay*, and *ſand*, in order to explain to him, the different proportions in which they are found to be contained in water.

680 ounces of water, may contain 1 ounce of limestone; 7700 ounces of water, may contain 1 ounce of clay; 10,000 ounces of water, may contain 1 ounce of sand.

Such being the proportions, in which three different earths are found suspended in water, it becomes an object worthy of attention to the farmer, to reflect, that the particles from the limestone, are not only more congenial to his grass than either clay or sand would be, but also, that 680 tons of water from a limestone rock, would bring as much in quantity as 7700 tons of water from clay, or 10,000 tons of water from a sandy stone rock.

and sometimes 5th year clover. This is the rotation of good farmers.

Second system. 1st wheat. 2d barley. 3d pease. 4th oats, and sow clover. This is the practise of bad farmers.

Third system. When coarse ground, that has long lain neglected, is to be ploughed, they proceed thus.

1st year oats. 2d year a fallow. 3d year wheat. 4th year barley and clover. Let the clover lay one, but sometimes two years. Then proceed again; sow on the clover brush, 1st year wheat. 2d year barley. 3d year pease. Then a fallow for turnips or wheat.

Fourth system. 1st year wheat. 2d year pease. 3d year barley. 4th year pease or oats, then a fallow.

They admit themselves however, that this is bad husbandry; and that taking more than three crops, without laying the land down in grass seeds, is not honest.

Fifth system. The following however, is not uncommon. 1st wheat. 2d pease. 3d barley. 4th oats and rye grass. Eat the rye grass in June, then make a fallow for Michaelmas wheat.

They break up their fresh ground in March, give a cross ploughing in May, a third in June, and lay the land up in small ridges 4 feet wide. They give a fourth ploughing, at the time of sowing the wheat, which is from the end of September, to the middle of October, as the weather will permit, if they give the land a cross harrowing, between each of these ploughings.

The best farmers endeavour to sow their wheat as near as they can to the 29th of September. If they sow earlier, they will have a great deal of straw, but less grain; and if later, the grain will not be the worse, but the straw will be shorter.

They do not like to sow their wheat in dry weather, but wait frequently, for several days longer then they could wish, for rain to moisten the land before they sow. They wish for a dry day to throw the seed into the earth,

and

and would rather have a day or two of dry weather, after the seed is sown.

They admit, however, that this rule is not infallible, and that on stiff land and clay, they would have better crops, if the land was quite dry when they sowed their wheat seed.

Second crop they plough towards Christmas, and sow pease towards the end of March.

Third crop, 1st ploughing about Christmas; 2d ploughing at the end of February; 3d ploughing at the latter end of April, and sow barley or oats, and clover; let the clover lay two years.

This is the mode of husbandry, which long experience has proved to agree best with this kind of land, which from its sandy nature, is incapable of supporting more than three grain crops in succession. When it has lain two years in clover, plough it up, sow wheat on the clover brush, furrow, and it will bear to be wrought in this manner, to the end of time; and yield three crops of grain, and two of clover, between each fallowing and dressing.

They find, that they have a better crop of barley, after taking a crop of pease between the wheat and the barley, than if they had sown the barley immediately after the wheat.

But even in this district, things are not always managed as one could wish. For although the above rotation, and number of crops, are universally allowed to be the only fair and honest method of dealing with the land, yet there are those, who over-burden their lands like their cattle, with a heavier load, than either of them can bear. Repentance, however, is the never failing lot of him, who knowingly deviates from the straight line of rectitude, in whatever concerns either himself or others: Since a man's interest stands in a predicament, somewhat similar to his morals, for both are often materially injured,

injured, by sacrificing a certain advantage at a distance, to a trifling gain, that happens to be at hand.

They do not find, that the oats thrive so well on their best bottom lands, as they do upon the moory upper lands, because their best land being of a sandy nature, the oats from the heat, will ripen before they have time to fill, as they ripen in the valleys a month sooner than on the hills.

Rotation of Crops. The vale of Uſk, the general practice is as follows. 1 year fallow. 2, wheat. 3, pease or barley. 4, oats. 5, turnips. 6, barley and clover. Let the clover lie two years, and the ninth year, a cross of wheat and clover brush.

This is the common system, along the vale of Uſk. But a gentleman of superior discernment, whom nature had endowed with a mind too capacious, and with a turn of thinking too masculine to submit to the cramping fetters of any custom, which reason and *facts* did not justify, has happily broke through the magic spell, which had long held many of the farmers in this district in bondage. The following is the invariable rotation of crops which he takes.

First year, a fallow and sow turnips. 2, barley and clover. 3, clover. 4, wheat on clover brush, of one year's standing. 5, pease or oats. 6, fallow again, and sow turnips.

He lays 22 bushels of lime on an acre of clover lay, ploughs it down, sows the wheat broad cast on the top of the furrow, and harrows it in. Never suffers the clover to stand more than one year, lest the land should get foul.

In order to judge of the propriety of this excellent system, it is requisite to bear it in remembrance, that all the land here is of a light sandy nature, and contains by far, too small a proportion of clay. Hence, the plough

can scarcely be used too sparingly, nor the roller too much.

Here are no summer fallows. To what purpose, should there be any, since they are found to be not only useless, but hurtful on such a soil? The object in view, being to repel, not to admit the scorching sun beams of summer.

The Quantity of Seed. To a statute acre of wheat, from 14 to 15 gallons, if sown early; but if late, they allow more for the crows, who in the more early season, have plenty on the stubble. If the seed is sown early, every blade will come up, but not so if late sown.

Barley from 25 to 30 gallons per acre.

Oats from 24 to 29 ditto.

Large grey pease 27 to 30 ditto.

White pease 22 to 23 ditto.

Clungy pease 21 to 22 ditto.

Clover seed, if the land is meant to lay two years, or for seed, 10 pound per acre; if for one year, only 8 pound, and 2 gallons of rye grass.

Manure. Lime is the only manure used in this district, except the production of the farm vegetables, all pulverized earth. They lay on the fallows from 520 to 600 gallons of lime, a statute acre. This is the quantity found to answer best, but stingy lazy farmers, lay on about one half of this quantity only. They carry one load of lime a day, to most part of this district. The good farmers make compost, and are well acquainted with the advantage of collecting, and mixing all the pulverised earth they can gather on the roads and lanes, to augment the mixing. Fern and other green vegetables, are frequently thrown into the hollow wet part of the bye roads, to rot during winter.

Stock. They are much inclined to work with oxen, in preference to horses; but their great distance from lime and coal compels them to keep one horse team at least upon

upon each farm. The general rule is, to have one third of the number of teams of horses, and the other two third oxen. The small farmer, however, who has only one team, must have that a horse one. They work their oxen yoked; and the parochial roads especially are so narrow, and cut up by the waggon wheels always traversing the same tract, that no road work can be done by yoke cattle.

Seed Time, and Harvest. They wish in general to finish sowing by the end of April; and in most years they begin harvest the first week in harvest.

Common Fields. There are no common fields in this district, except a few spots in the neighbourhood of Talgarth.

Labourers Wages. For some years past, labourers wages have been a shilling a day for men, and six-pence for women, finding their own diet. But last year the wages of the men were raised to seven shillings a week. The time of labour, from six to six in summer, and from light till dark in winter. Half an hour allowed for breakfast, and an hour before dinner. Ploughman's wages in the year, living in his master's house, from £7. to £9.

Most of the work, however, is done by persons hired either by the day or by the year.

Drains. From the uneveness of the face of this country, the stony or gravelly nature of the subsoil, and the general prevalency of sand in the superficial soil, there is not any considerable quantity of land in this district oppressed by a superabundance of water. Some spots, however, there are, that, from their clayey nature, have such an inclination to retain the water, that, in some places, under drains have become requisite; and the work is in few corners of the kingdom more judiciously performed than here. The making of these drains forms a profession by itself;

itself; and much room there is left for the exertion of penetration and judgment, in cutting the drains in such a direction as to do most execution, by catching the greatest number possible of springs.

The breadth of the drain at the bottom is eight inches, and as narrow as they can keep it at the top—generally less than eight inches. The depth, from two and an half to three feet, as the raise of the hillocks, or other uneveness of the ground, requires. They fill them in within three inches of the top with stones—cover these with a thin layer of straw, fern, or rush, and throw back the earth. The stones will in a short time sink three inches; which, with the three inches before mentioned, puts the stones six inches below the surface of the ground. This will always be sufficient, because they never plough more than four inches deep.

The price of making these drains, is a penny a yard, the landholder finding the stones and straw. The farmer generally allows some drink; and he ought to be present at the filling and covering of the drains, because the smallest neglect in that part of the operation may ruin the whole.

The drains ought to remain for some time open.

Wood Lands. These, of all other things, do the most discredit to this district. They are kept under no system whatever, nor is there the smallest attention paid to the preservation of them, either by landlord or tenant. Such trees as have escaped the general havock, by being out of harm's way, and arrive at timber, are then owned by the landlord, because they will fetch money. But by what fortunate circumstance they have escaped the brousing of cattle, the cottager's axe, or the hedger's bilhook—how, in defiance of such a host of foes, they have arrived at maturity—or how others are to get up in their place

when they are cut down, are circumstances which, I believe, seldom occupy much attention.

It is true, in all leases there is a clause—that the tenant shall not cut, lop, or top any timber trees, or trees likely to become so; nor suffer any other person to do so, &c. All this looks very pretty in theory—But, behold the practice!

By the custom of the country, the tenant may cut what underwood he wants for hedge boot and fire boot. But if he had a hundred acres more than he wants for those purposes, he cannot sell any from the farm. He will, therefore, scarcely raise a crop of young wood for his landlord's use, especially since he pays him rent already for the very land on which such wood must grow. The consequence is obvious: Since the landlord will not suffer the tenant to sell the underwood, nor turn it in any manner to his own advantage, he will generally take care, that the landlord shall not reap much benefit from this rigid exertion of his prerogative. The tenant, in fact, with some degree of reason, considers all the timber, and other woods growing on the land, for which he pays rent and taxes, as intruding upon his right; and being always in the way, they will frequently feel the marks of his resentment. But give the tenant an interest in the wood, matters will be wonderfully changed in their favor. They will then be considered as a most valuable appendage to the farm; and growing as they do of their own accord, without any trouble or expence to him, they would soon become favorites.

In order to render the county of Brecknock one of the most beautiful and best wooded parts of this island, all that is requisite is, to let nature have her own way, and refrain from doing mischief to the young plants.

It would, therefore, be an easy matter to prevail on the farmer to be idle, when he was once assured of making money by his inactivity, by granting him the liberty of

turning

turning the wood to his own advantage, under certain restrictions; and making him a partner with the landlord, in some proportion, in the advantage to be derived from the growth of such young saplings as might have originally risen on his lands during the continuance of his lease. Should the wood lands of this country be ever placed on any footing likely to protect them from those horrible and systematical depredations to which they have hitherto been subjected, it must be in consequence of the operation of some plan similar to that which has been just hinted at.

The gentlemen of the law may restrict tenants, by writing covenants in leases to that effect. But giving the tenant some proportion of interest in the woods, and encouraging him to protect them, will have a far better effect than all the threatening language which lawyers can use against him to deter him from destroying it.

In order to encourage the growth of young timber, nothing is more requisite here, than just to inclose any spot of land. The oak and the ash, will rise of their own accord. What renders the neglect of protecting the young timber in this county the more galling is, that the Welch oak, on account of its lower growth, is preferable to the English; a circumstance not generally known, but which is easily demonstrable from a superior specific weight.

Provisions. The price of provisions are considered high, when wheat is at 1*s.* a gallon.

Barley at	—	7*d.*	a gallon.
Oats, when at	—	4*d.*	ditto.
Pease, when at	—	7*d.*	ditto.
Beef, when at	—	4*d.*	pound.
Mutton at	—	4½*d.*	ditto.
Veal at	—	4½*d.*	ditto.

The price is considered low, when

Wheat is at	—	7*d.*	a gallon.

Barley at	—	4*d*.	a gallon
Oats at	——	2½*d*.	ditto.
Pease at	—	4*d*.	ditto.
Beef at	—	1½*d*.	pound.
Mutton at	—	2*d*.	ditto.
Veal	——	2*d*.	ditto.

There is seldom much variation in the prices of poultry, which are as follow. Pullets 6ᵈ. Ducks 7ᵈ. Geese 1ˢ. 6ᵈ. Turkies 2ˢ. 0ᵈ.

The prices of the respective articles above mentioned, have been both higher and lower, than those herein mentioned. What turn the price will next take, it is hazardous to say.

Turnpike Roads. About 30 years ago, the gentlemen of this county, opened a subscription among themselves, for defraying the expence of widening and repairing the main road, which is the thorough-fare from the counties of Pembroke, Cardigan, and Carmarthen, as well as a great part of this district to London. The funds arising from this mode of proceeding, proving to be insufficient, they were under the necessity of soliciting the aid of parliament, in order to enable them to borrow money, and set up gates for collecting a sum sufficient to pay the interest of this money. This I think was the first turnpike gate set up in South Wales. The bulk of the people became clamorous, and considered themselves almost ruined, by the imposition of a tax unknown to their fore-fathers. The gentlemen, however, persevered with a steady conduct, and a determined resolution of doing good to the people in spite of themselves; and they soon met with that submission, which the bulk of mankind are always ready to yield to legitimate power, when exercised under the rigid government of unsullied justice.

The people, however, found to their great surprise, that independent of other advantages which they derived from

from the turnpike road, that the inhabitants of the other three counties, who had hitherto travelled free through this, now left with pleasure at the different gates, more money annually, than paid the interest of the whole sum laid out in making the road. It has at last turned out, that the landed property of the county at large, has been advanced one third at least in value, by the success of innovation, which the people had not only opposed with all their power, as being pregnant with the most mischievous consequences; and which was submitted to at last only in consequence of its having been supported by all the heads of their most ancient and respectable families.

There was a misfortune attending the original making of the turnpike roads throughout the whole kingdom: And this county has felt, and still continues to feel, its share of the universal calamity. Wheel carriages were not then so common as they are at present: hence the advantage of level roads were but faintly seen. The gentlemen, therefore, unfortunately did not go to the root of the evil; for, except where the hills were very steep, they contented themselves with widening the old road. This was the case of almost all the kingdom. When the land was originally inclosed, the top of the hills being less fertile than the bottom, the road was generally pushed there by the land-owners: And their descendants, at this day, feel, and are long likely to feel, the sad effects of this puny parsimony.

The present trustees, however, are very sensible of the improper direction of the turnpike roads in general through this county; and by a patriotic exertion, worthy of imitation, are now busy in making new roads round the bottoms of those hills which their less considering predecessors had boldly climbed over.

The road lately made from Bwlch to Lime and Coal, through Llangunider, ascends from the river Usk to the summit

summit of the south district of mountains, in a space not exceeding two miles.

Luckily for the public, this road was wholly left to be laid out by the surveyor of the trust, Mr. Church, without yielding, as is done in most cases of this nature, to the whim and caprice of the land-owners; or, what is much worse, to that of their tenants. This was the most difficult district of road ever attempted in any part of South Wales; and in the hands of any man not possessed of the most profound abilities, could not have been accomplished. An elevation of 300 yards, nearly, is obtained in the space of 4000 yards only.

Notwithstanding the immense heighth for a turnpike road, the elevation is so judiciously directed, that the ascent is never more than one-thirteenth, or one yard in thirteen. A brook crosses the road, which, to a judgment less penetrating, would have proved a stumbling block; but this Mr. Church has turned to advantage, by creeping slowly up the side of it before crossing; adhering inviolably to that judicious rule of never yielding an inch of that elevation which he had once obtained, whatever direction his adhering to such a rule might give the road. This, among other instances, that might be produced, is a convincing proof, that the present improper direction of the turnpike roads within this county ought not to be imputed to the present trustees, nor to the artist, to whom they have so deservedly trusted the management of them.

SECOND DIVISION.

The second division includes the hundred of Builth—including the other mountainous districts of the county.

Soil. The nature of the soil will be best explained by an examination of the genus of the stone that compose the

the mountains of this district, which are of the *homogeneous stratified class*.

The stone consists almost, wholly of a brittle blue slate, called here *Rab*. It does not strike fire with steel. It is so soft, that it may be scratched with the nail of the finger. Its *lamina* is so thin, and the power of cohesion, that unites the thin slices in which it is found, is so feeble, that, on being exposed to the air, it rents, cracks, and falls into small pieces. It is a species of the *argillaceous genus*; and when powdered, and mixed with water, turns into clay.

The soil of the *low lands*, and valleys, is, therefore, composed of a weak loose earth, of the *argillaceous genus*. When water is permitted to stand on this soil, it becomes a deadly poison to all *useful* vegetables. The weak *slaty* particles of which it is composed, consisting mostly of clay, is, by the long continued presence of water, turned into a moist substance. Its clayey nature makes it part with water with great reluctance.

This soil is not hostile to vegetation when in a dry state: but even then, it is of a soft loose nature, and wants what the farmers call *a staple*. When newly ploughed up, and pressed by the foot, it gives *too little resistance*.

This soil is not endued with the qualities of attracting from the atmosphere the nutriment of plants; but a very small proportion of lime gives it that power in a very uncommon degree. Lime gives it, besides, a degree of cohesion in which it is naturally deficient.

State of Farming. That high degree of approbation with which, in conformity to the most rigid adherence to truth, I have had the pleasure of mentioning the industry and good husbandry of the first division of this county, must be considerably abated, when I enter upon the less inviting task of reporting the rural management of the second.

Ascending

Ascending from Hay to Builth, by the side of the Wye, a distance of 20 miles, the valley, for the last half of the way, is very narrow; but, upon the arrival at Builth, it spreads so wide as to afford some relief to the agriculturist; who might be apt to murmur at the apparent stinginess of nature, in pressing the rocks so close upon the river for such an extent.

For two or three miles round the town of Builth, the tillage part of husbandry is performed in such a manner, as to rescue the farmer from any severe degree of censure. This, for the practice of the *hundred of Talgarth*, hath crept slowly up along the side of the Wye; but further towards the mountainous part of the county, it has not yet found its way.

Size of the Farms. The farms are, in general, very small. There are not, in the whole district, ten farms, that rent for more than one hundred pounds a year. Bordering on the commons, there are a great number of small holdings from five to ten pounds a year; but the general run of farms is from twenty to forty pounds. The price per acre of the best farms may be from six to seven shillings; but the poorer land is let from about three to four. There is one whole parish let for only two shillings a statute acre. It is found, in *general*, that the lower the land is let, the tenant will be the poorer, and the cultivation of the farm more neglected, than if the rent had been higher. This will be, in some degree, accounted for, when we come to speak of the *commons*.

Mode of Occupation. The land is mostly employed in pasture. Although the county is thinly inhabited, they do not raise grain sufficient to support themselves, but are supplied from the first division of the county. For the payment of their rents and taxes, they depend wholly upon their dairy and stock. About a fourth part of the inclosed land, only, is employed in the raising of corn.

Great

Great part of the land is in the original state in which nature formed it, and has never been ploughed, from the following, among other, causes: There are large tracts of land here called *Rhoses*, almost, useless to the farmers. Innumerable springs ooze from the sides of surrounding hills and mountains. Where the descent is not very rapid, nor the quantity of water issuing from the spring so considerable as to form a rill, it soaks the earth for some distance, until it is again imbibed by the soil. This moisture encourages the growth of *rushes*, and other course *aquatics*. Since the cattle will not eat these, they are suffered to decay on the spot where they grew. The earth of these *decayed vegetables* have, in time, formed a kind of spungy soil, of a Turbary nature, for a few inches deep; below which is a cold hungry blue clay. This soft Turbary serves the *double pernicious purpose* of preventing the departure of the water, and that of locking up the soil beneath it, from the benign influence of the atmosphere. The small pittance of coarse hay which these wet lands produce, are annually mowed, and given to the cattle in *winter;* for, in summer, they will not eat it. This alone is an insurmountable objection to the introduction of any other kind of cattle, except the small *hardy natives;* at least, until these lands are first rescued from the hand of their *mortal enemy*, *water;* which is no less fatal to this species of clayey land, than it would have been beneficial to a sandy soil. Another portion of land prevented from being used in tillage, is the sides of steep hillocks, or banks of brooks. These are mostly occupied by timber or brushwood; and when the timber hath been cut, the roots still remain, and prevent the entrance of the plough. Some of their best land is thus left to nourish birch, thorns, and other trash; for no care is taken to keep the woods from cattle after the timber has been once *cut*. The land is, therefore, rendered, in a great measure, useless for ages.

Tillage. To clear such kind of land *from timber* has been formerly considered of so much advantage to the *freehold* in this district, that the tenant who holds a farm at *will*, considers himself intitled, *at this day*, to take *as many timber trees as he pleases*, if he takes the *roots along with them;* and thereby prepares the land for tillage. The *dry part* of all the low lands in this country, *seem* to have been *at some distant period* covered with timber, and the inhabitants forced to raise their corn on the hills. This accounts, in some degree, for the right which the tenant *conceives* himself to have to all timber growing on the land which *he clears*.

When a field is in tillage, the *dry spots only* are ploughed. The parts of the field that *are to be ploughed*, is most exactly *ascertained* by that ancient distinguisher of good land, the *mole*, (wunt) who is well known to avoid all *wet land*, on which he never trespasses: And the farmer *hero* suffers the water to keep possession of his *ancient freehold* with a kind of superstitious, and, seemingly, conscious reverence.

Stock. In the low lands, horses, horned cattle, and pigs, are the stock; but sheep is the principal dependance of the hilly farmers adjoining the commons. The profits arising from the sheep upon these extensive commons enables the farmers to live without paying *scarcely* any attention to the improvement of his farm. In general, he sends for most of his corn to the next market town.

There are a number of gentlemen *sheep farmers* in this district; and most of the money made by farmers has been by sheep. The quantity kept will depend upon the farmers capital in money to stock the hills. From one to five thousand by the great, and from one to five hundred by the small farmer.

Cattle. One of the *few good farmers* in this district, and whose land is dry, has lately tried the Pembrokeshire breed of cattle; and he has found them to answer very well.

well. One of the many *bad* farmers has tried the same breed, and they have failed. This confirms what will naturally occur to every intelligent farmer—that the *improvement of the land*, and *practice of husbandry*, ought to take place before any new breed of cattle should be tried in *our hilly district* especially.

Clover. Good, and even tolerable farmers, sow clover seed: The bad sow no grass seed whatever.

Meadows. Watering of land, is little practised in this district. In dry land, it is found to be of advantage, but not to that extent that it is in the other parts of the county, from the cold clayey nature of the soil. The softness of the stone that compose the hills here, has permitted the brooks and rivers to make such *deep beds for themselves*, that it is not possible to raise them, in the length *of one farm*, so high as to lay any *considerable* extent of ground under water: And there is seldom any springs in *this kind of stone* that afford any considerable quantity of water, from its clayey nature. The water rather *oozes* than *springs* out of these hills composed of this *soft rab*.

Crops. In the low countries, the grains are, wheat, barley, rye, and pease. In the hilly parts, oats is the principal grain, with a little barley and rye.

In the hilly parts, they carry the muck to the land that has lain for some years in grass, at different times, from the beginning of October to the end of February; but the *sooner* they lay it on the land, *the better*. They plough in February and March, and sow in April and May. The 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, and sometimes the 6th and 7th crops, *are all oats*. When the land will not *yield the seed*, they leave it in that state for *several years* to *recover itself*, and break up *fresh land*. It must, at first view, excite some degree of astonishment, that a class of men, endued by nature with a *keenness of penetration*, and a *solidity of judgment*, which may be *equalled*, but which has not been *surpassed*, by any of their fellow subjects in this

island, should, from *father* to *son*, persevere so *stubbornly* in a practice so *destructive to themselves*. They all insist, that no *other mode of husbandry* would agree with *their* land; and that their *fathers did so* before them. These, however, are only the *avowed* reasons: The *real truth* is, that when the land has once been broke up, it is more *easy ploughed* than fresh land would be; and they are, from the habit of *idleness*, very averse to *labour*. Their cattle are also small, and in the spring especially, *after a whole winter's starvation*, they are very weak; for they never think of ploughing in winter. Two little ponies, and two cows often *in calf*, compose the team. This *horrible practice*, however, is most prevalent on the verge of *extensive commons*, or where *a great deal of land is let for little money*.

To argue with them, however, on this subject, is but to little purpose. Few are aware of the difficulties which they have to encounter, when they enter the list to combat *national errors* by the *sedate* weapons of temperate reason; nor of the *insurmountable obstacles* that oppose them, when they attempt to root up, from the human mind, absurdities, originally engrafted upon ignorance, but which, in the progress of ages, have acquired a degree of maturity and strength, that renders them too stubborn to yield to the meek voice of *common sense*. The *good man* will be slow to scout them with that severity which truth would dictate, because he *inherits* them, like his *territorial possessions*, from his *fathers*. "They grew with his growth, and strengthened with his strength." The indolent man, whose insipid mind is too *feeble* to wield the *masculine* weapons of reason, will not oppose them, because that would be *too much trouble*.

Their making oats their *principal* grain is highly commendable. Their taking such a *great number* of crops *successively* from the *same* land *only*, is reprehensible. The oats raised upon these mountainous lands, are preferable

ferable to those raised on the rich lands. They ripen *too fast* on the good—six weeks sooner than on the poor land. Hence the rind is thicker, but the corn less and softer, than on the hilly ground.

They sow about the end of April; and harvest is seldom over before the middle of October.

There are no common fields in this district.

The size of fields are, on small farms, from three to four acres; and on large ones, from eight to ten.

Fences. Good, and even tolerable farmers, have quick fences of thorn, hasle, birch, or whatever they have on their lands, made in the same manner as those in the low parts of the county. *Bad* farmers make dead fences, by splitting oak trees for stakes, placing them at the distance of three or four feet from each other. Wattlings and boughs of trees are wrought along these stakes in a basket form, and the field is thus protected while the *corn is on the ground.* When the land can bear *no more grain*, this fence is taken down and *burned*, and a fresh one made, *by cutting down other oak trees for stakes*, and other wattlings.

However, since oak timber has become of *some value* here, such an *unnecessary* destruction to the landlord's timber, and such a waste of the *tenant's labour*, begin to be discountenanced by such landlords as pay a *tolerable* degree of attention to their own interest. The oak destroyed for this purpose, is often worth more than three years rent of the field thus inclosed.

When underwood is near little more than double the expence of *labour*, requisite to make these temporary fences, would be sufficient to make a bank and quick fence that would last for ages. Thorn, hasle, ash, and oak, will thrive in their best land; sallys, in the wet land; and the hardy birch, and mountain ash, will do well in the poorer soil. Quick fences become the more requisite in *this* climate, where *shelter* is wanted as much as *protection.*

It is, however, hard to break through *an old custom* that has been consecrated by time, especially when the *saving* made by *adhering* to such a custom, is *near*, and that to be obtained by a breach of it, *is distant;* more especially, when the calls of the *present moment*, are so urgent as to supersede all consideration respecting the *future*. This is in general the case *here*, where the holdings are small, the soil ungrateful, and the tenants poor.

There is a custom just begun here which bids fair to remedy this evil. The price of making the quick fence and bank, is one shilling a perch, (seven yards). One half of this is paid by the landlord; the other by the tenant, who is bound to take care of the quicks thus planted, and leave them in good order at the expiration of his lease. This mode of *encouraging* rather than *binding* the tenant, is dictated by justice, and sound policy, on the part of the landlord; for the tenant having *apparently the whole* benefit of the fence, will exert himself, in order to have his fields commodiously laid out, since he pays only *half the expence*.

Quick fences are of great advantage in this cold bleak country, from the shelter which they offer to the live stock, as well as to the vegetable tribe.

The old custom was, that the tenant might plant quicks, or do without them, at his own option. Indeed, the old rent of two or three shillings an acre, did not enable the landlord to appropriate any part of this rent to building or making fences. Hence the tenants maintained their respective buildings, *such as they were*, at their own expence, the landlord allowing them rough timber, *if he had any*. Since many farmers held their lands *at will*, the state of the buildings may *easily be conceived:* In order, therefore, to remedy this evil, a very laudable custom is lately attempted to be introduced.

The tenant carts the materials, and furnishes the workmen with victuals and drink, while they are em-

ployed

ployed in making new buildings, or repairing the old. The landlord pays them their wages. This pleases the tenant, because he advances *no money*.

Waste Lands. One half of this district, containing in the whole five hundred and twelve thousand acres, is waste lands. The principal stock kept upon these extensive mountains, is sheep; some horned cattle and horses are also depastured there in summer, but the number is not considerable, because the farmers, by neglecting the cultivation of their inclosed land, have not sufficient keep for them in winter. In many places, therefore, the commons are sufficient to keep in summer three times more stock than the parishioners can send there.

Whoever will examine the state of agriculture in the vicinity of all the extensive mountainous commons in this island, will hazard little in risquing it as a *general* remark, that the cultivation of the enclosed lands are neglected in a very *uncommon* degree, and that a national loss, to a very considerable amount, is annually sustained by the public, in consequence of such neglect. It is not difficult to account for this, when it is remembered, that few like to *labour hard* who can afford to be *idle*.

Here the farmer possesses a *large* tract of land for *little* rent; and these extensive commons, which, as an appendage to his farm, he enjoys *gratis*, furnishes so wide a range for his flocks, that, upon the profits of *these alone*, he can subsist, without the *drudgery* of that hard labour, to which the cultivation of his farm would unavoidably subject him.

Consonant to the inviolable principles of human nature, was the remark of the *inspired writer*, when he informs us, that it was inflicted on man *as a curse*, "That he should earn his bread by the *sweat of his brow*:" For few will be inclined to submit to *this curse*, who can provide for the *demands of nature*, by any employment *less* painful. Necessity at first drove man to dig the *earth*; and when that *necessity ceases to exist*, he will always be found

found ready to desist the performance of *an office*, which he never embraced *through choice*.

Waste lands in the vicinity of large towns, or in the middle of a wild cultivated country, if they be not of *any considerable extent*, may be useful in their present state. The poor may derive some benefit from them, without depriving the community *altogether* of their labour: But, in this country, where the commons extend eight or ten miles in a straight line, and the narrow valleys that surround them being thinly inhabited, they become, in a peculiar degree, *hurtful to society*, by holding forth a temptation to idleness, that *fell* parent to vice and immorality.

That these commons furnish pasture for a great number of sheep and young cattle, is certainly true: But whether that advantage be not in a considerable degree, *if not wholly*, overbalanced, by that loss which the nation sustains in being deprived of the labour of that vast number of people to whom these commons offered the *means* of wasting their time in *idleness*, becomes, at least, a *question*: But idleness is an *improper term*, since nature has implanted a principle of *action* upon every *animated* being, as much as *rest* is a principle of *inanimate* matter. Every member of the community, who is not employed in the performance of some useful or good action, is generally busy in the accomplishment of some destructive or wicked deed. That immense loss which many of the honest part of the community have, in the vicinity of these commons, sustained, from the depredations of that numerous gang of *sheep-stealers* that infest these hills, are too notorious to be questioned; and they justify the truth of this remark.

Excepting those who reside *in the vicinity of large commons*, the inhabitants of this county are remarked for their honesty, sobriety, and peaceable demeanor.

The brooks or rivers that run through these commons, form beautiful narrow vallies. The banks of these are

inclosed,

inclosed, and laid out in little holdings, from 5£. to 20£. a year. The inclosed land may extend from 20 to 100 acres. The *inclosed land*, however, is but a *second consideration* with the tenant, since he will scarcely take the trouble to keep up the fence between it and the common. He will, however, plough up, in the spring, a few spots of the *dry part of a field:* the wet part he leaves in the same state in which it has lain for a thousand years. All the improvement that has been introduced during *that* period, seems to be, that, in the *eighth century*, the muck was carried to the land, in two baskets, on the back of horses. It is now placed in a basket, and drawn, by the horse, on a *sledge*. The tenant avails himself of the *same machine*, to draw home his corn and hay. From the hills, on both sides of his farm, the water oozes out, and falling down, destroys his best land; but such is the wonderful effect of *habitual idleness*, that he will not take the trouble to draw even a furrow with the *plough to direct* its course, by the side of the field; the reason is obvious, he can live upon the profit of his stock that depasture upon the commons. His farm is, therefore, totally neglected.

From the *notoriety* of these facts, it will readily occur, that it will ever be found sound policy in the government of *every State*, to give discountenance to every measure that tends, *even in the smallest degree*, to put it in the power of the people to live *idle*. While the State pursues this plan, it is not possible for it to act wrong, since it only follows the great line chalked out by *nature;* for nature has erected so many *real* wants, that *her* intention *seems* to have been, that man should employ one half of his time in providing for these *wants;* and in order that he might be always out of the reach of those temptations to which idleness *invariably* leads, matters are so *wonderfully* contrived, that, for most part of the other half, his eyes are closed in *sleep*. Hence the whole period of life *seems* intended for action; and at such time as *actions* cannot be

performed, a kind of *temporary* non-existence takes place, by sleep.

In order, therefore, to excite a spirit of improvement among the people, the *first step* seems to be, to put it as *much as possible out of their power to live idle;* and the *second*, to put it in *their power* to exert themselves in a way that will be beneficial to themselves; which, in the end, must prove advantageous to the community at large. Nothing *seems* so likely to accomplish *both* those ends, in *this corner of the land*, as a general division of all *extensive* districts of commons.

Supposing that only one third of these commons could be cultivated to raise grain, one acre would, when so employed, produce more food for society, than ten do in their present state. Independent of this addition to the general mass of national wealth, such poor people as are now starving, for want of work, in many sequestred corners of the kingdom, would then, if they were inclined to be industrious and useful, find employment in the cultivation of the commons; and the worthless and profligate, deprived of the means of subsisting in idleness and sloth, as they do at present, in the vicinity of these commons, might, in time, become useful members of *that community* to which they have hitherto been a post and a burden.

Although tillage be not *the principal* purpose to which these commons ought to be applied, if enclosed, yet there are several tracts by the sides of the brooks and *gentle* hillocks, that might be so employed.

The steep and rocky sides of mountains may be planted to great advantage. The soil is so congenial, *when dry*, to the growth of timber, that nothing is more requisite, than just to enclose the ground, and protect it from the cattle. The plants will rise of their own accord. Most of the rocky part in which the cattle could not come to destroy the young sprouts, are now covered with trees of various

various kinds; but the oats is the great favorite of this soil.

The remainder of this land ought to be used in the depasturing of sheep and cattle, as at present. Great part of these mountains, in their present state, are not only *useless*, but *hurtful*, to the sheep especially, on account of the waters being suffered to take *their own* course down the sides of these mountains, and destroy such immense tracts of land. This never can be removed while these commons remain in their *present state*. But were they inclosed, the water would be diverted into channels that would relieve the ground from the fatal ravages of this enemy.

From the great extent of the commons, and from the narrowness of the cultivated valleys that surround them, I do not think that any method could be devised to correct the present *mode of commonage*.

Labourers. Scarce any labourers are employed in the hilly parts, as scarce any work is done, except by the tenant, his wife, and children. The rate of wages, and the time of working, in the lower parts, is much the same as the rest of the county.

Drains. No drains whatever, are made, although there is scarce a part of the kingdom where they are so much wanted—where they could more easily be made—or where they would be more beneficial. So totally blind are the people to their own interest, that scarcely any ditches are made round their *wet fields*.

Paring and Burning. This mode of improvement is sometimes practised, but although they have a good crop or two, the land is left useless for several years after.

Woods. The country is tolerably well wooded, notwithstanding the great quantity that has lately been felled. The wood-lands are kept under no system whatever, yet, in defiance of all difficulties, some young plants escape the general destruction made by the brousing of the cattle. Every spot into which the *plough*, the *cattle*, or the water,

has not found admission, is covered with some kind of wood, except the high hills.

Provisions. The price of grain is always *higher* here than in the other parts of the county. Butchers' meat and poultry are *considerably lower*. The price, from the sudden stop to the circulation of *paper money*, is likely to continue falling, as it has *rapidly done* within the last six months. In which short period, the value of the landed property has sunk one fourth part in this place.

Roads. The state of the roads, both public and parochial, is the worst that can be conceived in a hilly country where the roads are in general *sound*, because there are few travellers.

The stone of this country is of the worst kind that can well be conceived for laying on roads. The heat of the sun makes it crack, and its clayey nature makes it admit the rain through these cavities, which soon turns it into a clay. The people, however, are contented with these *bad roads*, because they are *almost* wholly excused from the performance of the statute labour. The *farce* of *appointing surveyors* in the respective parishes, however, is *annually kept up*. The want of *residing* magisrates in this extensive district, to enforce this and other parts of the duty annexed to that office, is no where in the kingdom so severely felt as here. On entering Builth, *the little capital of this district*, the traveller, however, to his astonishment, is put in mind by the *gate-keeper*, that he has been travelling on a *turnpike*. He will naturally conclude that very few of the trustees reside in this part of the county.

Farm Houses. The farm houses are in a very poor state in general, the hardy race that inhabit them, however, feel no inconvenience from that circumstance; no regard whatever, has been paid to the situation, so as to avail themselves of the droppings from the farm yard being

turned

turned upon the land below, so carefully observed in the other parts of this county.

Leases. No clauses are put in leases here, but the usual one, except on some of the best farms in the lower parts; the landlord allows some money for lime the first three years, and the tenant is bound to lay on an equal quantity the last three years. The first lime laid upon the land here, has been within the memory of the present inhabitants. This allowance seems to have been made by the landlord, with a view to encourage the introduction of that manure. The few who do lime in this district, have a deal of merit in so doing, since they carry it about 30 miles along mountains and bad roads. The coal at is an equal distance, but, excepting the town of Builth, little of this fuel is used, for they have either wood or turbary in most places in great plenty. Some navigable canals now in agitation to be made in the adjoining districts, may soon relieve them from the disadvantage which at present they labour under, on account of their distance from these useful commodities.

Commerce. There is neither commerce nor manufactories carried on in this place. Its inland situation (50 miles from the sea) hindered any attempt to introduce the former; but, excepting the distance from coal, it is remarkably well calculated for the latter, especially in the woollen line.

Immense quantities of sheep depasture on the mountains, whose fleece pay the rents. The average price one shilling a pound, the weight about a pound and a quarter each fleece.

Manufactories. The only branch of manufactory carried on in this place, is the working of stockings. These are sold at the markets around for eight pence a pair. A woman, with very close application, may *card*, *spin*, and *knit*, four pair of these in a week, one pair of those stockings weighs near half a pound, which, at ten pence a pound

pound, is five pence out of the eight pence; some pairs, however, weigh only seven ounces, but as there is a pennyworth of oil requisite for every pound of wool, we may fairly state the raw materials of each pair of stockings, to be worth five pence; hence the woman has only three pence for carding, spinning, and kitting a pair of these stockings, or one shilling a week. Hence the woman has to support herself in food, raiment, fuel, and house rent, for seven days upon this shilling; yet, at some times of the year, it will buy her only one *gallon of wheat*. Such is the employment, and such the only means of subsistence within the reach of the poorer sort of females over all this extensive district, although these are as remarkable for industry, as the males are for an aversion to labour. What a pity that this spirit of industry could not be directed to some channel, more beneficial to themselves, and the community at large, than this pitiful and ill-judged employment. In all mountainous districts, such as that under review, where the soil does not hold forth much temptation to the husbandman's industry, it is apt to be *wholly* neglected; hence the females who find employment in the fields in more fertile counties, are here deprived of the means of rendering themselves useful in any considerable degree, at least in the business of husbandry.

Nature, ever mindful of the wants of *all* her children, did not leave them destitute of the means of providing for the demands of the day, even in those unhospitable regions; and the subject before us, presents a memorable proof, that the rule has not been deviated from in the present instance.

The extensive mountains in which this district abounds, are covered with innumerable flocks of sheep, the manufactory of whose fleeces into woollen cloths, would furnish employment for more than double the number of the present inhabitants. Yet, wonderful as it must seem, the wool is almost wholly purchased by dealers in that article,

article, as soon as it is separated from the sheep, who send it, some one, some two hundred miles to be manufactured; there it furnishes the necessaries—the comforts of life, to thousands of our more deserving—more industrious fellow subjects; while the natives of the mountains where the wool grew, are either idle, or manufacturing the refuse of it into stockings, in the pitiful way just mentioned. To complete our humiliation, part of the wool thus manufactured into cloth, is sent back for our consumption, the said 200 hundred miles again. When we thus pay ten shillings for that quantity of wool for which we received about one, and looking around us contemplate the wretched state of our own poor, let us wrap the fine garment round us with what *comfort* and *pride we can.*

This is a calamity, which the poor cannot of themselves remove, and which the wealthy do not feel. But the present genius of the times may alter. Who knows but that some one of these sequestered valleys may yet produce a patriot, who, throwing aside the stiff embroidered tinsels, and frivolous trappings of state, which too often surround high stations; and, calling to his dejected countrymen to lay aside their indolence, and their sloth, prevail on them to follow the path that leads to comfort, to wealth, and to independency.

The Brecknockshire Agriculture Society. This respectable association, I am informed, was either the first or second of that kind established in this island. It has now been in existence for near forty years. To the original promoter, as well as the present supporters of this most laudable institution, the public are in a great measure indebted for the rapid advancement which agriculture has made in some quarters of this county, during that period. Most of the gentlemen of the county are suscribers; and a very handsome

some sum is annually distributed among candidates who excel in various branches of husbandry. The *premiums* are most impartially bestowed; yet there are nine-tenths of the inhabitants of this county, that have no chance of ever being benefited by them, in the smallest degree, since they can never presume to become candidates. The occupiers of the small portion of good land, which this county contains, must always have the *premiums*. The inhabitants of the hilly parts, in some places, scarcely yet know that there is such a society in existence; so little intercourse is there between the inhabitants of the *rich* and *poor* districts of this county.

Contrast between good and bad Farming. There are some farms in this district, but I hope their number is small, who are so blind to their own interest, as to take the following rotation of crops.

1st year, wheat. 2d year, barley. 3d year, oats. 4th year, pease. 5th year, oats, with clover.

How different is the following system, successfully adopted in the same county.

1st year, wheat on clover hay of one year's standing.

2d year, turnips.

3d year, barley, sow clover.

4th year, clover spring feed; 2d crop for seed.

Second Course.

1st year, wheat.

2d year, barley, sow clover.

3d year, clover, *spring feed*; 2d crop for seed. Lime and muck the clover sward about Michaelmas, then plough it down, and on the top of the furrow sow wheat. Then turnips, and so round again.

This is the invariable practice of Mr. Thomas Edward, of Aberlunvey*, in the hundred of Talgarth, who stands eminently

* It is remarkable that the two gentlemen, whose practice do most credit to the agriculture of this county, have neither of them been brought up farmers; but

eminently distinguished in a district abounding with the best farmers in South Wales. His land is a kindly rich soil, whose characteristic feature is sandy.

He never sows any oats. When he sows pease, which is but seldom, wheat or turnips always follow. Let those who tell us that they cannot keep their land *clean from weeds* without a fallow, come to Aberlunvey; and then say, if they know a farm in all the county, that is kept *equally clean* with the *usual whole year's fallow*.

Hints for the farther Improvement in the County of Brecon.

There are large morasses in various part of this county, interspersed through its extensive commons. These turbaries are situate often one, two, or three miles from most of the small hilly farms. These might be turned to advantage by burning large quantities of the peat in summer, and carrying the ashes to be laid in spring upon their poor coarse meadows, which would not only *double* the present *quantity* of hay, but also add much to the *quality*. In several parts of England peat-ashes are bought at a

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but have, till the meridian of life, followed professions no way connected with agriculture. Had this not been the case, I suspect that we should not have seen either of them follow that course of husbandry, which they do at this day. During infancy, the tender mind, unable to judge for itself, must, from the force of *precept* and *example*, have been initiated into the principles of the "*Old School*." When the judgment begins to exercise that strength, and exert that vigor, which she has acquired during the progress of years, it will be often found, that a prejudice, and a partiality for *early habits*, have been equally busy in mustering up forces to oppose *her mandates*. What has cost much labour to acquire, we do not like to throw away. Few there are who can bear to be told, that they have been labouring under a mistake all the former part of their lives.

high price, and carried 10 or 15 miles to be laid on the land. In this corner they are quite neglected, not a handful laid on the land. The only reason that can be given is, that they are at *hand*, and can be had for *nothing*, of course they are despised.

Great part of the hilly farms, on the north-west corner of this county especially, are far from lime, 30 to 35 miles; any substitute for that manure would, therefore, be very desirable. Sheep are never folded in this country; and there are, comparatively speaking, no bounds to the extent of the commons, which are in summer stocked with sheep. This animal has a most partial attachment to fresh *ploughed up ground*, which, in summer, it will always prefer to *herbage* for *its bed*. If a land, or any side of a bank of red earth be near, the sheep will be there often in hot weather.

If while the shearers are stripping it of the fleece, they happen to give the animal a wound, it will often rub the affected place in the first fresh earth it can get at.

The farmer whose land is surrounded by large commons stocked with innumerable flocks of sheep, may avail himself of the animal's attachment to *fresh mould thus*.

Fix upon some spot of the adjoining common, from which he can afterwards carry the earth with most ease to himself, and in the spring plough up half an acre, or an acre of it. The sheep that depasture on the surrounding hills will, of their own accord, make this the place of rendezvous; and, by their dung and urine, will make the surface for a few inches deep a most rich and valuable manure, whilst his own sheep, and those of his neighbours, will find here a comfortable asylum from the flies, and other vermin that infest all spots that are covered with *any herbage*. Let him plough this ground again about Michaelmas, to make it easier to lift into the cart, and lay it on his corn land, and he will find an advantage of which he is little aware, should he get the better of his aversion

to

to *innovation* so far as to make the experiment. There is one objection to the adoption of this scheme in all countries that lie in the vicinity of large commons, where alone it is practicable, because it is attended with *some little labour*. It may be said that the Lord of the Manor would object to both these schemes, because it would be *carrying away the soil*. In some parts of the kingdom this might be the case; but the different lords of manors within this county, are *all* of a description that renders them above the suspicion of availing themselves of that power they possess on *such* an occasion, farther than just to preserve their *right*, by the most trifling acknowledgement. Besides, their own extensive territorial possessions makes them too much interested in the improvement of the county, to suffer them to oppose any plan that was likely, in any degree, to contribute to its general prosperity.

The proprietors of lands situated in the mountainous districts of this county, would contribute much to the improvement of the country, were they to restrict their respective tenants, by a covenant in their leases, to adopt some *rational rotation of crops*; and not suffer them to ruin themselves and the land by taking five, six, or seven crops of oats following; a succession which would, in time, destroy the richest land in the kingdom. There is such an attachment to the "Old School," that nothing but *bribes*, or *compulsion* can remove it. Persons are now alive, who remember the *first lime* being laid on land in the neighbourhood of Builth. The landlords got it first introduced by the *force of bribery*. In the leases about 30 years back, and some even granted at present, *this* forms part of the condition. "The landlord reserves a rent, which the tenant agrees to pay; but *in case the tenant shall every year lay a certain number of bushels of lime*, in a husbandlike manner, on some proper places of the demised premises, the landlord *agrees to allow* him a *certain sum yearly out of the said*

rent. If the tenant neglects to lay the lime on his land, he forfeits all claim to this allowance.

Could the cultivation of clover, turnips, potatoes, and pease, be introduced into the hilly districts of this county by some such *species of bribery*, the landlords would soon see a change on the face of the country. So totally blind are the tenants to the advantage of any *green crops*, and so powerful is the effect of habitual idleness, that they scarce raise any thing even for family use in their gardens, which, on the approach of winter, are generally left open to the *ingress* and *egress* of the sheep and cattle ! !

Here we shall have the hue and cry raised against the soil. That soil, however, cannot be *very bad*, that would bear *even the seed* of oats sown for six or seven years following without any manure.

Upon examining the gardens and fields of such gentlemen in these hilly districts as do *common justice* to the land, we shall find that the complaints against the soil are true only in a very limited degree.

It will be said, that their breed of horse and neat cattle are so small and weak, that they cannot give their land the requisite number of ploughings. It is true, that in the spring, after being half starved all the winter, this is the case; but in autumn, after a whole summer's good run on the hills in idleness, the fact is otherwise. Instead of doing *some part* of the ploughing in autumn and the beginning of winter, when their cattle are *strong* and in *good spirit*, every thing is put off, *as long as it is possible to put it off.*

The genius of *mischief* could not contrive things worse than they are in this respect. For the ploughing, even of the land that has lain for ten or twelve months *(to recover itself)* is not begun until the *spring*, the only season of the whole year in which their cattle are least able to perform the work. The land must not be *turned up to the air* until the time of *sowing* arrives; for then it might require a *second*

cond ploughing. To give *two ploughings* to the land for *one crop* would be *ruination*. Ploughing an acre *once* is worth more than *two years rent* of the land! What a deal of labour would be here thrown away!!!

*Turnpike Roads**. When the trustees finish what they have now in hand, that part of the thoroughfare from Milford-haven to London that lies within this county, may challenge any space of equal extent between these points, for safety, commodiousness, and equality of surface. There is just one place of about two miles in length between Brecon and Crickhowel, *too well remembered* by travellers by the name of *Bwlch*. This pass still partakes of the *bold* features of the *old road*; and until this insufferable obstacle is removed, it will, in some measure, withhold from the gentlemen of this county, a share of that unlimited portion of public gratitude, to which they will then be justly intitled, for their spirited exertions in rendering the thoroughfare through this county, as fafe and commodious as it has always been beautiful.

In order to avoid this horrible precipice, it will be requisite to keep by the side of the river Usk, to the south of the present road for above two miles. The well-wishers

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* There is a method adopted of late by the trustees, which does great credit to them. The road, when once it is put into proper repair, is farmed out by the year, or for a term of years, at so much per mile, to keep and leave it in repair at the end of the term. The price is from two to five guineas per mile, according to the distance from materials. They endeavour to get every farmer to take that part of the road that goes through his own farm—a wise, and advantageous measure this for *both parties*—since the farmer can repair the road along his own land for one half the price that he could do were it only one or two miles off. If the team is going from home empty, it takes a load of gravel to lay on some hole of the road. If it returns empty, it does the same. When the clover is to be cleared of the stones, they are wanted for the road, and will pay for doing it. If there is a hole or two in the road, it may be mended in an evening, or a morning, in less time than a man who lives two miles off, would lose in coming to look at it. There is no method of keeping the highways in repair, so prudent for the trustees to adopt, in any district, as that of letting every farmer have the road through or by the side of his own land, at an annual rent.

to public utility console themselves with the recollection, that the new road, if mended, goes through the land of a gentleman of the first rank and consequence in the county, who, although it may rather encroach upon his demesne, they are in hopes will exert his usual liberality of mind upon this occasion; since by making such a sacrifice, he would confer no small obligation upon the county, as well as the public at large.

When this road is finished, it is to be hoped that some gentlemen, in other counties, who make this their thoroughfare, will be induced to examine the turnpike road in their respective districts. For let it be remembered, that every improvement that has hitherto been introduced into South Wales, the county of Brecon has always taken the lead. Here the first turnpike road was made. Here the first society for the encouragement of agriculture was formed; and a county, *to the west*, does offer annually a premium of *ten guineas*, to any of their farmers servants, who will come and reside for three years in Brecknockshire, and learn to hold the plough.

THE END.

IT has been remarked by some friends, to whose judgment the writer of the preceding report will always pay the greatest deference, that he has drawn a description of the mountains of Brecknockshire, in which poverty and sterility are too strongly marked; but as they candidly admit that they had never seen that quarter of the county to which that part of the report principally applies, he begs leave to assure them, that when they have time to examine it, they will find the picture not materially different from the original. Brecknockshire, however, has too many real beauties to boast of, to be ashamed to own the poverty of some of its hills.

It has been farther remarked, that he has given a decided preference to the soil and neat cattle of Herefordshire over Brecknockshire. What admits of demonstation requires not to be argued—

Herefordshire breed weighs from 14 *to* 28 *stone a quarter.*

Brecknockshire from 8 *to* 16 *stone a quarter.*

With these facts *before his eyes, was it possible for him to avail himself of giving a* very *decided preference to the Herefordshire breed?*

The two counties are separated in some places by a small brook, at other places by an imaginary line. *He trusts that it is not requisite for him to remind the reader, that he does not mean to insinuate that, for some distance, on both sides of this boundary there is the smallest difference, either in the soil, breed, or husbandry. He always alludes to the* general run *of the breed in both counties.*

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